

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY P:P.HABIB

APPROVED BY P:P.HABIB

S/S:JLHOGGNSON

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 184238 TOSEC 190147

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS FROM HABIB

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AEMR, PLO, LE US

SUBJECT: PUBLIC RELATIONS GUIDANCE

1. YOU WILL HAVE SEEN BEIRUT'S 6596. WE PROPOSE TO REPLY AS FOLLOWS. YOU WILL NOTE WE DO NOT PROPOSE TO PERMIT SEELYE TO RESPOND HIMSELF, AND HAVE REVISED HIS PROPOSED GUIDANCE ALONG LINES WE HAVE BEEN PREVIOUSLY FOLLOWING. WE SEE NO REASON NOT TO BE PRUDENT AND THUS SUGGEST WE DO NOT TOTALLY STONEWALL PALESTINIANS ON THIS MATTER. BEGIN TEXT:

2. WE WANT TO AVOID ANY STORIES THAT GIVE IMPRESSION IN ANY WAY THAT AMERICAN AMBASSADOR OR EMBASSY HAS GIVEN INTERVIEW TO PLO NEWS AGENCY. AT SAME TIME, WE RECOGNIZE IMPORTANCE OF DOING WHAT WE CAN TO MAINTAIN CALM ATMOSPHERE FOR EVACUATION. YOU SHOULD THEREFORE PASS WORD BACK THAT (A) EMBASSY OFFICERS ARE NOT AUTHORIZED TO GIVE INTERVIEWS TO ANY FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC PRESS REPRESENTATIVES OR AGENCIES, (B) RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS THEY HAVE ASKED HAVE ALREADY BEEN GIVEN IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER BY WHITE HOUSE AND DEPARTMENT PRESS SPOKESMEN, AND (C) FOR THEIR GUIDANCE, THOSE RESPONSES HAVE BEEN ALONG FOLLOWING LINES (PLEASE SECRET

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NOTE WE HAVE REVISED YOUR PROPOSED ANSWER);

3. Q - DO YOU CONTACT THE PLO TO RENDER SUCH ASSISTANCE AS POSSIBLE IN PROTECTING THE MOVEMENTS OF THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR IN BEIRUT?

A - YES, WHEN AMBASSADOR SEELYE MOVES IN THE CITY, WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH VARIOUS PARTIES INCLUDING THE PLO.

4. Q - DO YOU CONTACT THE PLO DIRECTLY OR THROUGH INTERMEDIARIES? IS THIS ON YOUR INITIATIVE OR THE PLO'S? IS YOUR GOVERNMENT AWARE OF THESE CONTACTS, AND DO YOU HAVE ITS APPROVAL?

A - IN CONSULTATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, THE PARTIES WITH WHOM WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH WITH REGARD TO MAINTAINING SECURITY INCLUDE THE PLO.

5. Q - WHAT IS YOUR POSITION REGARDING WHAT WAS PUBLISHED RECENTLY IN THE WASHINGTON POST CONCERNING THE PLO'S ROLE VIS-A-VIS AMERICAN CITIZENS IN LEBANON?

A - WE DO NOT ASSOCIATE OURSELVES WITH SUCH SPECULATION.

6. Q - WHAT KINDS OF ASSISTANCE HAS THE PLO PROVIDED TO AMERICAN CITIZENS IN LEBANON?

A - THE PLO HAS ASSISTED IN QUESTIONS OF SECURITY AND WELL-BEING AFFECTING INDIVIDUAL AMERICAN CITIZENS AND AMERICAN CITIZENS IN WEST BEIRUT.

7. FOR HANDLING THESE MATTERS, YOU ALSO HAVE AS GUIDANCE THE DEPARTMENT'S PRESS SPOKESMAN'S COMMENTS ON FRIDAY ABOUT THE EVANS-NOVAC COLUMN, THE STATEMENTS AUTHORIZED FOR THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SPOKESMAN ON THE 24TH PLUS THE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT'S AND WHITE HOUSE USE. SEE STATE 184202, 184210, AND 183421.

ROBINSON

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